

## Message Text

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ORIGIN PA-02

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FOR CARTER FROM PA

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: SOPN, OVIP (VANCE)

SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT EDITORIAL WASHINGTON POST, AUGUST  
12 HEADED "PANAMA TREATY TIME."

2. OVER THE LAST DOZEN YEARS IT HAS BEEN A MOUNTING  
DIPLOMATIC IMPERATIVE FOR THE UNITED STATES TO UPDATE  
THE TERMS ON WHICH IT ENJOYS ACCESS FOR ITSELF, AND  
ENSURES ACCESS FOR OTHERS, THROUGH THE PANAMA CANAL.  
THE TREATY THAT TEDDY ROOSEVELT IMPOSED UPON A PROSTRATE  
PANAMA IN 1903, GRANTING THE UNITED STATES CONTROL (NOT  
SOVEREIGNTY) "IN PERPETUITY" OF A STRATEGIC STRIP CUTTING  
THE COUNTRY IN HALF, SERVED WELL FOR DECADES. BUT AT  
LEAST SINCE THE 1960S, WHEN PANAMANIAN NATIONALISM  
BELATEDLY BEGAN TO ASSERT ITSELF, THE TREATY HAS BEEN  
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A SERIOUS EMBARRASSMENT TO AMERICAN HEMISPHERIC  
DIPLOMACY AND, BY ITS OWN PROVOCATIVE NATURE, THE  
LARGEST POTENTIAL THREAT TO CONTINUED AMERICAN USE OF  
THE CANAL. LYNDON JOHNSON STARTED LOOKING FOR A NEW  
TREATY IN 1964. JIMMY CARTER'S NEGOTIATORS, ELLSWORTH  
BUNKER AND SOL LINOWITZ, REPORTED AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE"  
THIS WEEK. THAT IS VERY GOOD NEWS.

3. ALL THE DETAILS ARE NOT YET DRAFTED, BUT THE OUTLINES ARE CLEAR. THE UNITED STATES WOULD, BY STAGES ENDING IN 2000, TURN THE CANAL AND ZONE BACK TO PANAMA, WHICH WOULD UNDERTAKE TO RUN THE CANAL AND KEEP PASSAGE OPEN TO ALL COMERS. AFTER 2000, THE UNITED STATES COULD INTERVENE TO PROTECT THE CANAL'S "NEUTRALITY" AGAINST THIRD-COUNTRY THREATS. WE FIND THESE TERMS FAIR. THE RISKS OF EVENTUALLY HAVING THE CANAL IN OTHER HANDS CANNOT BE WISHED AWAY. BUT THOSE RISKS SEEM SUBSTANTIALLY SMALLER THAN THE RISKS OF KEEPING THE WATERWAY EXCLUSIVELY IN AMERICAN HANDS. THE KEY AMERICAN CONCESSION (TO YIELD CONTROL ,IN PERPETUITY") WAS MORE THAN MATCHED BY THE KEY PANAMANIAN CONCESSION (TO PERMIT WASHINGTON A DEFENSE ROLE AFTER 2000). INDEED, GEN. OMAR TORRIJOS, PANAMA'S LEADER, WILL HAVE NO SMALL PROBLEM REBUTTING THE CRITICISM THAT HE GAVE UP MORE THAN A SELF-RESPECTING SOVEREIGN STATE SHOULD. IMAGINE FRANCE WITH A RIGHT OF INTERVENTION IN NEW ORLEANS.

4. THE SENATE, WHICH MUST RATIFY A NEW TREATY, AND THE HOUSE, WHICH WILL VOTE ON CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE RETURN OF PROPERTY AND CONTROL, NOW FORMALLY ENTER THE PROCESS. HOLD ON. IN THE CONGRESS AS IN THE COUNTRY, MANY PEOPLE BRUSH ASIDE THE STRATEGIC AND DIPLOMATIC BENEFITS A NEW TREATY WOULD BRING AND THE LOSSES IT

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WOULD PRECLUDE, AND PROJECT WORST-CASE SCENARIOS IN WHICH THE PANAMANIAN, DEFYING EVERY SENSIBLE INTEREST OF THEIR OWN, BREAK THE TREATY AND SOMEHOW CLOSE THE CANAL AND PERHAPS TEMPT RENEWED AMERICAN INTERVENTION. TOO, MANY PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE, CORRECTLY, THAT THE CANAL IS A MARVELOUS AMERICAN ACHIEVEMENT BELIEVE, INCORRECTLY, THAT IT'S PERMANENT, SOVEREIGN AMERICAN TERRITORY JUST AS THE 50 STATES ARE. THE GOING ;ILL BE ALL UPHILL. BUT IF JIMMY CARTER HAS MARCHED UP THE DIPLOMATIC HILL WITHOUT BEING PREPARED TO FIGHT THE POLITICAL BATTLE, HE'S NOT MUCH OF A PRESIDENT. CHRISTOPHER

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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
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